



Facultade de Filoloxía

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

# Richard III's Double Dimension in "A Game of Thrones": a comparative study

Graduando/a: Raquel García Extremadouro  
Directora: Dra. Cristina Mourón Figueroa  
Curso académico: 2018-2019



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## Formulario de delimitación de título e resumo

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**Título:** Richard III's Double Dimension in *A Game of Thrones*: A Comparative Study

**Resumo** [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

There can be no doubt that King Richard III is, perhaps, one of the most controversial kings of England, due to the shortage of contemporary records and chronicles and to his biased reputation as a result of his physical and moral portrayal in both the Tudor propaganda and the Shakespearean play which, basically, pictured him as a physically deformed villain and murderer.


This dissertation deals with a comparative analysis of the historical figure of King Richard III and Eddard Stark and Tyrion Lannister, two of the most prominent characters in *A Game of Thrones* (1996), the first book of George R. R. Martin's Saga *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Whereas Eddard Stark may resemble the 'historical' Richard, Tyrion Lannister may be considered a fictionalised version of the mythological character created by Shakespeare.

The methodology to be followed will entail a thorough and detailed comparison of the double dimension of Richard III's historical figure (i.e. his physical and moral descriptions in Shakespeare's play and in the Tudor chronicles) with that of the characters above mentioned in order to find out whether Martin's characters could be considered as a reinterpretation of the controversial reputation of the English king.

The study will be supported by a careful reading and reviewing of the most relevant bibliography on the subject.

Santiago de Compostela, 22 de outubro de 2018

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

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## 1. Introduction

This dissertation deals with a thorough analysis of the figure of the controversial English King Richard III and his biased reputation as a result of his physical and moral portrayal in the Tudor propaganda as well as in the Shakespearean play *The Tragedy of King Richard III* (1592-1593).

The aim of this dissertation is to compare the historical figure of the king with Eddard Stark, a prominent character in George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* (1996), as well as with Tyrion Lannister. Both characters may resemble the different dimensions that the historical king has acquired: a fictionalised one created by his detractors, and the historical one. The final goal is to conclude whether Martin's characters could be considered as a reinterpretation of the controversial reputation of the English king, reflected in the following passage of a contemporary chronicle by John Rous:

Retained within his mother's womb for two years and emerging with teeth and hair to his shoulders (...) This King Richard, who was excessively cruel in his days, reigned for three years and a little more, in the way that Antichrist is to reign. And like the Antichrist to come, he was confounded at his moment of greatest pride (<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/john-rous-history-of-the-kings-of-england>. Last accessed: 06.22.2019).

The methodology will entail a deep analysis of the double dimension of Richard III (the physical and the moral ones) highlighted by historical texts, both of which have a fictionalised and a historical basis. The study will be supported by careful reading and reviewing of the most relevant bibliography of the subject.

Richard Plantagenet was born on October 2nd 1452, being the youngest son of Richard, the Duke of York, and his wife, Cecily Neville. His father's position against King Henry VI and the Lancastrian regime of the time led to his early death in 1460 at the battle of Wakefield. These events left Richard with no father, and England with a conflict that would be known as the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485), a period of political instability and constant civil war for the possession of the throne of England between two rival branches: the House

of Lancaster, led by King Henry VI and his loyal followers, and the House of York which was represented by Richard's father and his supporters (Ross, 1999: 4-5). This civil war would persist intermittently for 32 years, until the death of Richard III, also known as the last Plantagenet.

Richard became Duke of Gloucester at the age of eight and began building a strong paternal relationship towards his brother, King Edward IV, who was responsible for his younger siblings' education after his father's death (Ross, 1999: 6). The young duke was always supportive to his brother, which resulted in him commanding the vanguard in many battles, such as those of Barnet and Tewkesbury (April 14th and May 4th 1471 respectively), at the age of eighteen, one of them resulting in the imprisonment of the former king, Henry VI and his later death at the Tower of London.

Richard was awarded many northern estates as well as marriage to Anne Neville (Ross, 1999: 7), the widow of the Lancastrian Prince of Wales, which made Richard a very wealthy man, since he inherited the lands and possessions of his father-in-law, the Earl of Warwick. The couple moved to the north of the country, and Richard was named Guardian of the North by his brother the king, and held the north against any Scottish incursions.

Nevertheless, stability would not hold long in the kingdom since King Edward fell ill in Easter 1483 and named his man of trust, Richard, Lord Protector of England to act as regent after his death as well as protector of his children. King Edward IV of England died in April (Carson, 2009: 15) and his son, Edward V, ascended the throne at the young age of twelve. However, the coronation had to be cancelled since King Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was declared illegal because of a pre-contract of marriage between him and another woman, Lady Eleanor Talbot<sup>1</sup>, so all their children (included the Princes) were

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<sup>1</sup> Lady Eleanor Talbot was the daughter of John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury (Walpole, 1768: 41).



declared illegitimate by the Parliament, and therefore, unable to occupy their father's place in the throne of England (Ross, 1999: liii).

Only four days after this sudden change of events, Richard III became king of England. However, he lost his former supporter, the Duke of Buckingham<sup>2</sup>, who started a rebellion, supported by the House of Lancaster and the exiled Henry Tudor<sup>3</sup>. Nobles and gentry throughout England who were not satisfied with Richard III's rule became involved in the rebellion. Meanwhile, Richard lost his wife and his son in 1484 and this made him weak towards the invasion of Henry Tudor's forces that took place in August 1485.

Richard III, the last Plantagenet king, died in that same year fighting against Lancastrian and Tudor forces at the battle of Bosworth Field. His death ended the Plantagenet dynasty as well as the Wars of the Roses.

## **2. Physical Dimension**

### **2.1. The King in the Car Park**

After five centuries, archeologists and researchers from the University of Leicester found a skeleton under a car park in Leicester in the summer of 2012, and it was believed to be the remains of King Richard III, killed at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485.

Philippa Langley led the search for the remains of the king and the *Looking for Richard Project* with the aim of disproving old myths about the king which had become truth, such as the common saying that, after his death in Bosworth Field, his remains had been thrown into the river Soar. She approached the University of Leicester Archeological services in 2011 and asked them for help (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 6). For the Scottish writer and

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, was an English nobleman whose power had "enormously increased" in Henry VI's reign. He helped Richard III ascend the throne, but later became an ally to the Tudor cause and led the so called Buckingham Rebellion, which ended up with his execution for treason (Ross, 1999: 164-165).

<sup>3</sup> Henry Tudor was the son of Edmund of Hadham, earl of Richmond, and of Margaret Beaufort. His claim to the throne "rested entirely upon his descendent from Edward III through the Beauforts and their progenitor John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster" (Chrimes, 1999: 3).

historian, everything that was claimed about the king and could not be physically disproved had to be questioned after that discovery:

By questioning, we were able to uncover the real Richard and disprove many of the myths that surrounded him – myths that had, over time, become ‘truths’. Our years of work brought extraordinary results, demonstrating what can be achieved when preconceptions are set aside (<https://www.historyextra.com/period/plantagenet/what-has-the-discovery-of-richard-iiis-remains-taught-us/>. Last accessed: 06.10.2019).

Langley did her own research before beginning the project and she found out that a Franciscan friary had been located in the centre of the town of Leicester in the medieval period, now urbanised and modernised (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 6). However, finding it was not going to be easy, since monasteries had been demolished during the rule of King Henry VIII, after their dissolution in 1538 (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 7). This particular friary had been sold to multiple owners, divided into different pieces of land, and streets built above it, so “the location of Richard III’s grave was lost” (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 9).

Luckily, researchers had the help of scholars, such as David Baldwin, who analysed a series of historical texts, one of them being Rous’s *Historia Regum Angliae*, as well as Polydore Vergil’s *Anglica Historia* (1934). Both chroniclers claimed that Richard had been buried in the Franciscan friary of Leicester.

By studying historical maps and the properties of the lands of the city, researchers located an area within which they estimated the grave must be, and dug three trenches so as to find it. After excavating multiple graves, on August 2012 a skeleton was found underneath a car park in the city of Leicester. It had no feet, probably due to building activities which took place long after his death (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 20).

The grave itself was unusual. In Leicester, medieval graves are generally dug very tidily, with neatly squared sides. The other graves discovered in the friary church were like that. This grave, however, had messy, sloping sides and was smaller at the bottom than at the top, as if it had been dug quickly (...) The position of the skeleton showed that the body had not been tightly wrapped in a shroud - a common medieval burial custom - nor was there evidence of a coffin (...) As the grave was consecrated ground within the church, and in a relatively prestigious spot, whoever was buried there would certainly have had a proper Christian funeral, however minimal that might have been (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 21).

From this moment, a series of tests and the retrieval of evidence began so as to find out if they had found remains that would change the course of history. After months of thorough analysis, on February 4th 2013, the University of Leicester confirmed the well-known secret: the remains found under the parking did belong, indeed, to the last Plantagenet king.

Since the bones were confirmed to belong to Richard III, a subsequent research project began to find out everything 21st-century science could explain about the death and the physical features of the medieval king, especially those connected with the controversy about him being a hunchback person, which was later dismissed by scientific tests. DNA tests, led by Dr. Turi King of the University of Leicester, were applied to the skeleton with the following results: “He [Richard] had blue eyes (...) and blonde hair, though it may have remained blonde only in childhood” (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 124). Thanks to the findings and the technological advances, Dr. Ashdown-Hill, author of many books dealing with the findings and member of *The Looking for Richard Project* had already reconstructed Richard III's descendant line.

The official webpage of the University of Leicester research team who found the remains claims the following about them:

The skeleton is quite slender for a man but there is no skeletal evidence for the limp or withered arm favoured by authors such as Sir Thomas More or William Shakespeare. He did, however, suffer from severe scoliosis (curvature of the spine). This would have probably lifted his right shoulder higher than his left (<https://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/science/osteology-3-analysing.html>. Last accessed 06.10.2019).

After confirming that the bones belonged to Richard III, Dr. Turi King began to analyse Richard's DNA. To do so, the mitochondrial DNA of the samples found had to be analyzed to find the female line of descendants (already identified by Dr. John Ashdown-Hill), and the Y chromosome to find out the male line. It was not an easy task, since female records are difficult to follow because of the change of surnames and marriages. Although male records

are usually better documented and more detailed, “we can nearly always be sure who someone’s mother was, but the identity of their ‘father’ and their biological father do not always match, as Y-chromosome analysis can reveal” (<https://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/science/relatives.html>. Last accessed: 06.11.2019).

Through e-mail correspondence between Dr. Ashdown Hill and Dr. Turi King (Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 38), we learn that Richard’s male descendant line had to be traced from his great-great-grandfather, Edward III, since Richard's children died without offspring. Descendants of Edward III had already been recognised as belonging to the line of Henry Somerset, 5th Duke of Beaufort. This evidence linked both male lines.

Richard’s female line was traced from two different relatives: Anne of York, his eldest sister, and Cecily Neville, his mother. Anne of York’s line went all the way to Canada, to a retired journalist called Joy Ibsen and her three children, whereas Cecily Neville’s line was connected to a woman named Wendy Duldig, from New Zealand. Although in the first place, it did not seem likely that the DNA tests would yield positive results, the tests were carried out on the living descendants of the noble family and they matched, proving that Michael Ibsen and Wendy Duldig had a common female ancestor and were related by blood to Richard III (<https://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/science/relatives.html>. Last accessed: 06.11.2019).

## **2.2. King Richard III through Historical Chronicles**

Undoubtedly, King Richard III’s reputation has been put into hold ever since his brother, King Edward IV, suddenly died in 1483. The last king of the Plantagenet dynasty has been surrounded by controversy for over 500 years and, to this day, he has been both extravagantly praised and widely criticised.

John Rous and Sir Thomas More were two of the main chroniclers of the 15th century who wrote about the king. John Rous wrote *The Rous Roll* during Richard III's rule, presenting a very positive image of the king:

The moost myghty prynce Rychard ... all avarice set asyde, rewled hys subiettys in hys realme ful commendablylly, poneschyng offenders of hys lawes, specially extorcioners and oppressors of hys comyns, and chereschyng tho that were vertues, by the whyche dyscrete guydyng he gat gret thank of God and love of all his subiettys ryche and pore and gret laud of the people of all othyr landys a bowt hym (*The Rous Roll*, chap. 63: [http://www.richardiii.net/2\\_1\\_0\\_richardiii.php](http://www.richardiii.net/2_1_0_richardiii.php). Last accessed: 06.20.2019)

During the rule of the Tudors, it would have been considered treason to speak or write in good terms about Richard III, a public enemy of the throne and of the whole family in power. But when, a century after they began to rule England, the last of the Tudors died, Sir George Buck saw an opportunity to break the archetype of the king that had been constructed for more than a century. He had an interest on the figure of Richard because he had Yorkist ancestors. Just like Buck, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many defenders of Richard saw that it was safe for them to speak up.

*The History of King Richard III* by George Buck was written in 1619, but the manuscript was not published until 1647 because of the premature death of the scholar. At the very beginning of his writing, he states his reason for releasing that controversial book:

Because he hath been accused of great crimes and slanderously (as I verily believe) I shall make endeavour to answer for him and to clear and redeem him from those improbable imputations and strange and spiteful scandals and rescue him entirely from those wrongs and to make truth...present herself to the light (Buck & Kincaid, 1979: 6).

Throughout the book, he states the legitimate claim to the throne that Richard had, and even more, he refutes accusations made against the monarch, such as his deformity, and “concludes that the king’s “good name and noble memory” had been foully maligned” (Dockray, 2013: xxiii). So as to praise the king, he points out the fact that “even his adversaries and calumniators confess that he was a very wise and prudent and politic and an heroical prince” (Buck & Kincaid, 1979: 208).

Throughout the book, Buck attempts to dismiss all the myths created by authors like Shakespeare, and chroniclers like Thomas More and to bring up the true figure of King Richard III. He even includes testimonies of people such as John Stow, “a sixteenth century chronicler and historian” (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 130), about whom he claims that “[John Stow] had spoken with some ancient men, who from their owne sight and knowledge affirmed he was of bodily shape comely enough, onely of low stature, which is all the deformity they proportion so monstrously” (Buck & Kincaid, 1979: 79).

Even though Buck was the first scholar to bring up the topic for discussion, the most important work in favour of Richard III was written by Horace Walpole, titled *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third* and published in 1768. In his text, he highlighted “inconsistencies in sixteenth-century portrayals of Richard” (Dockray: 2012: xxiv).

However, he did not only highlight the mistakes made by scholars and chroniclers from the king’s times; he had someone to blame for it: “Henry The Seventh invented and propagated by far the greater part of the slanders against Richard” (Walpole, 1768: 43).

The wave of support that arose towards the figure of the deceased king did not only come from chroniclers who rewrote his story, but also from important personalities at the time such as William Winstanley<sup>4</sup>, a poet and compiler of bibliographies, who in the year 1684 claimed:

(...) as honour is always attended on by envy, so hath this worthy prince’s fame been blasted by malicious traducers who, like Shakespeare in his play on him, render him dreadfully black in his actions, a monster by nature, rather than a man of admirable parts (Zeeveld, 1940: 946).

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<sup>4</sup> Influential poet and journalist of the 17th century who enjoyed the support of many influential men of the time, such as that of King Charles II (<http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk/people/detail/william-winstanley>. Last accessed: 06.10.2019).

A contemporary scholar who has written on Richard III is Anette Carson, who published *Richard III: The Maligned King* in 2009. Carson was part of the research team who found the remains of the king in Leicester in 2012, and after the discovery she published her book and added new information. Her intention from the very beginning was to revise the story we have been told for centuries about the evil king by examining events of his reign and dealing with topics and moments of history that chroniclers had not considered. She claims: “I cannot substitute my judgement for yours” (Carson, 2009: 11), stating that her analysis may not be the truth as other analysis should not be taken as the absolute truth either.

Even though she wants to provide an analysis of historical sources, she expresses her opinion in the preface of the book:

After Richard’s death the story of the murderous, tyrannical king was fostered by his killers and became part of English legend. Encouraged by a climate of Court approval, chroniclers vied with each other to heap venom on his memory and devise horror stories to add to his constantly growing list of crimes. In their ignorance, they jeered at his physical form and heaped on him an assortment of grotesqueries, believing that an ill-formed body was the outward manifestation of an evil mind (...) Shakespeare had little need for invention: he found the entire artifice already crafted to perfection by the Tudor chroniclers. By contrast, the scant information dating from pre-Tudor times is generally found in letters and jottings, cursory government records, or a few isolated narratives (...) (Carson, 2009: 10-11).

### **2.3. Lord Eddard Stark**

*A Game of Thrones* is the first novel of the saga *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which takes place in the fictional country of Westeros. Tinged with medievalism, the saga narrates the conflicts between the different noble families of the country, being the two main ones the Starks from Winterfell<sup>5</sup> and the Lannisters from King’s Landing<sup>6</sup>, whose conflict reminds readers of the Wars of the Roses and the clash between the Yorks and the Lancasters.

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<sup>5</sup> It is considered the capital of the North of the country (Westeros).

<sup>6</sup> It is the capital of the Seven Kingdoms and it is located in the South.

Lord Eddard Stark is one of the main characters of George R. R. Martin's fiction *A Game of Thrones* (1996). He is the head of House Stark<sup>7</sup>. In the book saga, he is a loyal friend and subject to his king, Robert Baratheon, as well as the Warden of the North before becoming the Hand of the King<sup>8</sup>. Just by knowing those facts, without reading the book, we can begin to notice the similarities between the historical and the fictional character.

George R. R. Martin based his novels on the historical period of the English War of the Roses, as well as his characters. However, there is not always a one to one coincidence between the figures. In the case of Richard III and Lord Eddard Stark, similarities are much more noticeable in their morality and in their relationship with the king. However, they can also be compared in terms of their physical appearance.

Even though the description of King Richard that prevails is him being deformed and hunchbacked, there is no physical evidence for these statements. In fact, the remains found in Leicester in 2012, which were proved to belong to Richard, prove a different case:

The skeleton showed that Richard's height was naturally about five feet eight inches, but this would have seemed significantly less when he was alive and so could justify the declaration of Scottish envoy William Whitelaw in 1484, that never had so much spirit and valour reigned in so small a body (...) Richard was of slender build (Dockray and Hammond, 2013: 3).

The description of Lord Eddard Stark that his own wife gives throughout the book is not much different from this one. Eddard is said to have a long face (Martin, 2011: 63) and long brown hair (Martin, 2011: 12), and although he is thirty-five, his beard is beginning to look grey, which makes him look older than he is (Martin, 2011: 12). He has got dark eyes, and is said to be shorter and less handsome than his older brother was by his wife, Catelynn Stark,

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<sup>7</sup> The country where the story takes place is divided into seven kingdoms, and each one of them is ruled by a noble family, such as the Starks or the Lannisters.

<sup>8</sup> The King's closest advisor, authorised to make decisions in the monarch's name.



in the second book of *A Song of Ice and Fire* saga ([https://awoiaf.westeros.org/index.php/Eddard\\_Stark#cite\\_note-Racok39.7B.7B.7B3.7D.7D.7D-11](https://awoiaf.westeros.org/index.php/Eddard_Stark#cite_note-Racok39.7B.7B.7B3.7D.7D.7D-11) Last accessed: 06.20.2019).

So, Eddard was low of stature, just the same that chroniclers of the time (even supporters) said about Richard; and he had long brown hair, just like the DNA tests showed about Richard. We could say that both figures fulfilled a similar social function as well as being alike physically, although there is a contrast in their eye-colour, since Richard was proved to have blue eyes, whereas Ned's (Eddard's) are dark. There is also a parallelism in their age, since both of them died in their mid-thirties.

Both Ned and Richard are compared to their older brothers in terms of their physical appearance and their sex appeal. As it has been previously mentioned, Ned is said to be less handsome than his older brother, most likely because he was shorter. Richard was also shorter than his brothers, having inherited that from his mother's family, whereas his brother, Edward IV "inherited to the full the Plantagenet characteristics of great height and good looks (...). His good looks were universally acclaimed by his contemporaries" (Ross, 1997: 10).

#### **2.4. "Fictional" Physical Dimension of Richard III and Tyrion Lannister**

Even though during his life Richard was regarded as a loyal and highly considered administrator of the North, his reputation drastically changed when the country entered a political and institutional crisis with the death of his brother the king, which ended with him as the king of England. Many events that led him to the throne have proven him a usurper according to the most critical faction of the country.

Ever since, Richard has been accused of being a tyrannical wicked ruler and a murderer of rivals. His questioned morals, together with his physical flaws were the perfect ingredients for the construction of an evil and monster-like myth around his historical figure and reputation, supported by chroniclers of the time, who served the Tudor dynasty.

John Rous had written positive things about King Richard III in his *The Rous Roll*. However, when Henry VII became king of England, Rous revised his work and eliminated every instance of the former king, leaving only records of his wife, Anne Neville. He also wrote *Historia Regum Anglica* between 1480 and 1486, in the Tudor reign, now praising Henry VII and completely changing his previous depiction of Richard III joining the rest of the chroniclers in their building of the evil myth:

Retained within his mother's womb for two years and emerging with teeth and hair to his shoulders (...) This King Richard, who was excessively cruel in his days, reigned for three years and a little more, in the way that Antichrist is to reign. And like the Antichrist to come, he was confounded at his moment of greatest pride (Rous, 1480-1500: 120-121, 123).

Sir Thomas More wrote *History of King Richard III* between 1512 and 1519 in the early years of the Tudor's reign. It detailed Richard's physical appearance and morality, reflecting the image of the king in the 16th century. However, this historical narrative received criticism which claimed that More did not know the basis of the life of the king because many years had passed since Richard III's death. They also reproached that the informants he used were not objective towards the royal figure. Despite criticism, his work was regarded as a trustworthy source at the time. About Richard III's physical appearance, More stated that:

(...) little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favoured visage (...) He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from afore his birth ever forward (...) he came into the world with the feet forward, not untoothed (...) So that the full confluence of these qualities, with the defects of favour and amiable portion, gave proof to this rule of physiognomy: "Distortum vultum sequitur distortio morum" (More & Sylvester, 1963: 7-8).

Both Rous and More focus on king Richard's physical features for his depiction of him as a monster. According to the ideals of the Renaissance, a deformity of the body manifested an inner deformity of the soul (Mourón, 2004: 117). This belief is claimed by More in his *History of King Richard III* with the sentence "*Distortum vultum sequitur distortio morum*", meaning that a distortion in character follows a distorted appearance.

However, Rous and More do not agree in every point of their depictions. They show differences concerning the physical characteristics they attribute to the last Plantagenet, such as the problem with his shoulder. While Rous claims the right shoulder to be higher than the left one, More says the opposite thing. Inconsistencies like this one remark the lack of proof that chroniclers had about what they claimed, and that what they did was saying what people wanting to hear, a good story of an evil and monster-like king who murdered people at will.

These chroniclers were not the only ones to write about King Richard III's alleged physical deformities. Polydore Virgil, an Italian scholar, published his *Anglica Historia* in 1534 after being "commissioned by Henry VII", but, in fact, he "never met Richard" (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 130). The chronicler follows the descriptive line established by previous scholars, stating that "He [Richard III] was slight of stature, misshapen of body, with one shoulder higher than the other, and had a pinched and truculent face which seemed to smack of deceit and guile" (Sutton, 2005: book XXV, section 25).

A few years after Vergil's publication, in 1548, Edward Hall, a lawyer and loyal subject of Henry VIII (Carson, 2009: 344) published his *Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke*, also known as *Hall's Chronicle*, which was a synthesis of More's and Vergil's arguments against King Richard III. Hall, just like the chroniclers he took inspiration from, wrote a propagandistic text seeking to legitimise the Tudor monarchy and to demonise Richard III.

In this atmosphere of social judgement and the negative chronicles about King Richard III, William Shakespeare premiered his play *Richard III* between 1592 and 1593. Although the author's intention was never to write about history but to create a fictional character using a historical figure, people learnt history through his play:

Richard Duke of Gloucester	Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time f into this breathing world (...) And that so lamely and unfashionable that dogs bark at me as I halt by them (Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 149. Act I, sc. i: 20-24)
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Shakespeare, on purpose or not, supported the image that chroniclers were giving and helped with the construction of Richard III as a mythical figure of evil and a monster, referred to in

the play as “bunch-backed toad” (Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 186. Act I, sc. iii: 246) and “abortive rooting-hog” (Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 185. Act I, scene iii: 225) among others. This representation has, together with contemporary chroniclers, made difficult to discern the fictional character from the historical king.

Ever since it was published, Shakespeare’s play has been surrounded by controversy because of his depiction of the king and its degree of realism and historicity. An article published in the Winter 1986 edition of the *Ricardian Register*, a publication of the Richard III Society, includes the result of the correspondence between Dr. James A. Moore, an American writer, and a Shakespearean scholar and member of the society, who was asked if she regarded Shakespeare’s play as a truthful source of historical facts. Moore stated the following:

She methodically analyzed Shakespeare’s characterization of Richard in the Henry VI plays, explaining how Shakespeare served his dramatic purposes by introducing anachronisms, by foreshortening historical time, and by embellishing “historical” details of Richard’s wicked image from Holinshed’s Chronicles (...) Shakespeare’s treatment of various sources supports the notion that his overriding purpose in Richard III was dramatic rather than historical (Moore, 1986: 1).

The physical image created by Tudor propaganda and followed by William Shakespeare seeks to create a monster, who is equally evil in the outside and in the inside. A very common Middle Ages and Renaissance topic that will be dealt with in the next chapter is that of demonising people ugly on the outside, believing that a physical ugliness manifested a spiritual and moral wickedness.

George R. R. Martin used both sides of the duality of this Renaissance topic to create two of the characters of his fiction. We could say that he used the two sides of the figure of King Richard III, the fictional and the historical one, to construct two totally different characters in terms of their morality and their physical appearance.

Tyrion Lannister is the character based on the fictionalised version of King Richard III, a dwarf born to a noble family of the country (the Lannisters), who still faces the prejudice people has on him because of his physical appearance. Because of the way people and even his family treat him, he wishes he was not born multiple times. He claims “All dwarfs are bastards in their father’s eyes” (Martin, 2011: 54) because of the scorn his father has shown to him since he was born. In the book, he is described as follows:

All that the gods had given to Cersei and Jaime, they had denied to Tyrion. He was a dwarf, half his brother’s height, struggling to keep pace on stunt legs. His head was too large for his body, with a brute’s squashed-in face beneath a swollen shelf of brow. One green eye and one black one peered out from under a lank fall of hair so blond it seemed white (Martin, 2011: 48).

Nowadays, it would not be this big of a deal to be born a dwarf, but in the world of *Game of Thrones* it was seen as a dishonor for the family. Tyrion himself says “Had I been born a peasant, they might have left me out to die, or sold me to some slaver’s grotesquerie” (Martin, 2011: 118).

We see the duality of mind and body through Tyrion’s eyes, which can be refelected in the fact that he has eyes of different colours. He accepts his body and the way he was born “My legs are short and twisted” (Martin, 2011: 118) and he has learnt a way to use it. He has learnt that he does not need to have a big body or long legs since he claims “My mind is my weapon (...) That’s why I read so much” (Martin, 2011: 118).

Martin portrays a dwarf who is not limited by his stature, a very intelligent person, usually underestimated, who does not care about others’ perception of him. However, his overtly masculine behavior, being always surrounded by prostitutes and drinking (“Oh, a whore and a featherbed and a flagon of wine, for a start” (Martin, 2011: 441) highlights his physical condition. He behaves so in an attempt to ignore and downplay the fact that he is a dwarf.

### **3. Moral Dimension**

### 3.1. Richard, the Serial Killer

According to the ideals of the Renaissance, a deformity of the body manifested an inner deformity of the soul. As seen before, this idea was already claimed by More in his *History of King Richard III* with the sentence “Distortum vultum sequitur distortio morum”, meaning that a distortion in character follows a distorted appearance.

To this account, Richard’s physical appearance is not the only thing that characterises him as a monster. His morality has also been put to hold, since he has been accused of a number of murders, the most controversial one being that of his nephews, Princes Edward and Richard, sons of Edward IV, known as The (Little) Princes in the Tower, and the alleged heirs to the crown of England

Richard was not always detested. He was rather seen as a loyal guardian of the North. Nevertheless, the turning point of his social image was his proclamation as king of England, which coincided with the mysterious disappearance of his nephews after being rendered illegitimate by the English Parliament. Until then, Richard was always regarded as loyal to his king, in contrast with his second brother, George Duke of Clarence, who had repeatedly committed treason against Edward. Richard was considered a loyal general to Edward in battle, helping him win the throne as well as helping him keep it by ruling the northern part of his kingdom. Indeed, Edward Hall, a well known Tudor chronicler, claims that Richard was “more loved, more esteemed and regarded by the Northernmen than any subjects within his realm” and that they also “entirely loved and highly favoured him” (Ellis, 1809: 426, 442-443).

However, when King Edward died in 1483, everything seemed to change. Richard was named Protector of the kingdom as well as of the Princes, Edward’s two sons. Richard had every intention to fulfill his duty as a protector. Instead, he was crowned King Richard III

after the Princes were declared illegitimate. The boys were staying at the Tower of London by order of their protector, since the Tower was a Royal Residence and the tradition stated that the future king should spend some days at The Tower prior to his coronation. Shortly after, the Princes disappeared. From that moment onwards, Richard was considered a usurper and a murderer and was accused of crimes which would be later on supported by different chroniclers of the period and by the universally famous playwright William Shakespeare in his play *The Tragedy of King Richard III* (1592-1593).

Throughout history, Richard III has been accused of numerous cold-blooded murders besides that of the little Princes, such as those of his brother, the Duke of Clarence; his wife, Anne Neville; and King Henry VI among others. These crimes have been used to construct the monster-like moral dimension of Richard III. In Shakespeare's play, different characters accuse Richard of different crimes, and he even admits to having committed them. First of all, Richard admits killing Edward, the young Prince of Wales, at the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471.

Richard Duke of Gloucester	Edward, her lord, whom I some three months since Stabbed in my angry mood at Tewkesbury (Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 172. Act I, sc. ii: 225-226)
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Vergil also states the following in his *Anglica Historia* (1534):

Prince Edward, a very excellent young man, was taken to meet Edward, and was asked why he had dared invade his kingdom and trouble it with arms. He had the presence of mind to reply he had come to claim his ancestral realm. Edward made no response this, he only waved the lad away, and immediately those who stood around him (these were Dukes George of Clarence, Richard of Gloucester, and William Hastings) cruelly butchered him (Sutton, 2005: chap. XXIV, section 18).

However, contemporary chronicles that deal with the Battle of Tewkesbury, like Dr. John Warkworth, state that Prince Edward was "slain on the field" (<http://www.richardiii.ca/the-crimes-of-richard-iii-myth-vs-fact/>. Last accessed: 06.20.2019).

Richard is also said to have murdered King Henry VI after the battle of Tewkesbury, and Shakespeare's character corroborates it:

Richard Duke of Gloucester                      (...) 'twas I that killed your husband (...)

(Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 169. Act I, sc. ii: 165)

However, it is commonly accepted nowadays that he was killed by the order of Edward IV since he had won the throne a second time and wanted no rival. This theory is supported by Caroline Halsted (2004: 348): "He [Henry VI] had yielded to a pitiable death by order of Edward, who was then King of England". However, at the time, every contemporary chronicle attributed the death of the monarch to Richard III, such as the one by Sir Thomas

More:

He [Richard III] slew with his own hands King Henry The Sixth, being prisoner in the Tower, as men constantly say, and that without commandment or knowledge of the King [Henry VI], which would undoubtedly if he had intended that thing, have appointed that boocherly office, to some other than his own born brother (More and Sylvester, 1963: 8).

The third crime added to the list of Richard III's murderous list is the execution of his brother George, the Duke of Clarence in 1478. In fact, the duke was accused of treason by King Edward IV, judged by the Parliament and sentenced to die (Ashdown-Hill, 2013: 200). However, as expected, Shakespeare and chroniclers have other version of events. Shakespeare narrates how Richard plotted against his brothers, and how he managed to get Edward to kill Clarence:

Richard Duke of Gloucester                      To set my brother Clarence and the King  
in deadly hate the one against the other  
(Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 150. Act I, sc. i: 34-35)

Richard Duke of Gloucester                      WI'll in, to urge his (Edward IV's) hatred more to Clarence  
With lies well steeled with weighty arguments;  
And, if I fail not in my deep intent  
Clarence hath not another day to live  
(Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 156. Act I, sc. i: 146-149)

Anne Neville married Richard III in 1472. She was already the widow of Edward, the son of Henry VI, whom Richard had allegedly killed. She gave birth to King Richard III's only legitimate son and heir who died in 1484. Anne died in 1485. Richard was said to have forced



Lady Anne to marry him, and was accused of murdering her because she could not provide him with more heirs to the throne. Shakespeare implies that Anne despised Richard and that he just wanted to make her suffer and kill her to marry his niece Elizabeth of York. Other authors such as Vergil claim: “(...) his wife Anne were to depart this life, then he himself could wed his niece, rather than endanger his rule by that affinity (...)” (Sutton, 2005: chap. XXV, section 7), “So as not so seem steely-hearted by giving his wife no sign of affection, the king replied by sweetly kissing and consoling her, telling her she should be of good cheer. But, whether done in by sorrow or by poison, the queen died a few days later (...)” (Sutton, 2005: chap. XXV, section 17).

Richard Duke of Gloucester	I'll have her, but I will not keep her long. What, I that killed her husband and his father, To take her in her heart's extremest hate (Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 172. Act I, sc. ii: 215-217)
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Lady Anne	For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell (Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 161. Act I, sc. ii: 49)
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The last and the most cruel crime Richard III has been accused of is that of killing his nephews and heirs to the throne, the sons of his brother Edward IV of whom he was Protector after their father's death.

Richard Duke of Gloucester	<i>“Infer the bastardy of Edward's children Tell them how Edward put to death to a citizen Only for saying he would make his son 'Heir to the Crown'”</i> (Shakespeare in Jowett, 2000: 264. Act III, sc. v: 73-76)
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Richard, whose mind was partly afire with lust for gaining the crown (...) had nothing but cruel and savage things in mind (...) with the people not objecting out of fear rather than actually approving(...) And so, without popular assent and only by the will of certain favoring nobles, and against law and right, Richard gained the crown (Sutton, 2005: chap. XXV, section 4).

I shall rehearse you the dolorous end of those babes (...) And forasmuch as his mind gave him that, his nephews living, men would not reckon that he could have right to the realm, he [Richard] thought therefore without delay to rid them (...) (More in More and Sylvester, 1963: 83).

Nevertheless, if we separate fact from fiction, we will discover that he had nothing to do with any of those crimes, but the case of his nephews, the Princes, is more difficult to justify in Richard's favor since there is no conclusive proof.

### 3.2. Facts: Was Richard a Murderer?

It is important to wisely choose our contemporary sources of information in order to know what to believe about the controversial King. *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III* is a re-visitation of Richard's life and the most common myths surrounding him by the 18th-century politician Horace Walpole. Throughout the work, he analyses the facts and comes up with conclusions about Richard's innocence in many of the crimes mentioned above. At the time of the publication, in 1768, the book was very influential and changed a lot of minds since Walpole was the son of the First English Prime Minister, so he was regarded a trustworthy source and he had many influences in the high spheres of the English society.

His work, together with others such as John Ashdown-Hill's *The Third Plantagenet* (2014), as well as documents of the period like the *Rolls of Parliament* or the *Croyland Chronicle* (1596) give light to the matter and prove Richard's innocence.

On the death of Prince Edward of Lancaster, John Warkworth claims in his *Chronicle* that he was "slain at Tewkesbury" (Camden Society, 1839: 18). Horace Walpole also had something to say about this accusation:

A contemporary names the king's servants as perpetrators of the murder: is not that more probable than the king's own brothers [Richard Duke of Gloucester and George Duke of Clarence] should have dipped their hands in so fool an assassination? (Walpole, 1768: 6).

In relation to Henry VI's death at The Tower, Walpole assumes as obvious that even though Richard might have participated in the murder, he did so under the command of his king and brother Edward, so it was not his decision since "it was against Richard's interest to murder him" (Walpole, 1768: 123), just like in the case of Clarence.

On Clarence's death, Ashdown-Hill, Vergil and Walpole assert the following situations: "As George Buck reported (...) 'it was not the Duke of Gloucester, but the King's

implacable displeasure for his malice and treasons that cut him [Clarence] off” (Ashdown-Hill, 2013: 200); “Clarence was dragging his heels and doing everything in a negligent way” (Sutton, 2005: chap. XXIV, section 13); “The Duke of Clarence appears to have been at once a weak, volatile, injudicious, and ambitious man” (Walpole, 1768: 11).

It has been affirmed that Lady Anne Neville was forced to marry Richard after her husband died and also that he killed her with poison. There is not a source to know if their marriage was happy or not, so there is no reason to say that Richard wanted to kill her in order to marry someone else because he could have done it if he wanted to, as the following record claims:

If Richard had wanted to take a new wife in order to beget another heir, he did not need to murder Anne. The couple were cousins restricted from marriage by the laws of consanguinity, and a dispensation from the Pope was required to allow them to legally marry. Richard failed to acquire that necessary dispensation before their marriage. If he wanted out of the marriage, he had only to claim that it was technically invalid, and he would be free to marry again (Richard III Society of Canada, <http://www.richardiii.ca/the-crimes-of-richard-iii-myth-vs-fact/> Last accessed: 06.10.2019).

Even more, Anne did not died by poison, but because of an illness, as claimed by Willers (2014: 285): “It was widely known that she [Lady Anne] had died of tuberculosis”. Among the drugs prescribed for the treatment of tuberculosis, we find two types of poison: mercury and arsenic which might have led to the rumours about Queen Anne having been poisoned (Sutton, 1985: 16-17)

Known as “The Princes in the Tower”, Edward V and Richard Duke of York were 12 and 9 years old respectively when their father, Edward IV, died in 1483. Richard Duke of Gloucester, their uncle, was named their protector by explicit wish of their father, and they were lodged at the Tower of London due to the conflict between the duke and the family of the king’s widow and mother of the Princes, Elizabeth Woodville. The Princes were supposed

to stay there until Edward's coronation, which was already being planned by the regency council. Nevertheless, a sudden change of events took place.

Richard and some of his loyal men found out that the deceased King Edward IV had signed a contract of marriage to Lady Eleanor Talbot prior to his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, which turned his children into illegitimate heirs because they were the offspring of a second and bigamous marriage, so they did not have a claim to the throne, as stated by the Act of Parliament known as *Titulus Regius* (1484) (<http://www.richardiii.ca/the-crimes-of-richard-iii-myth-vs-fact/#Myth6>. Last accessed: 06.11.2019). This unexpected discovery made Richard decide to claim the throne for himself; some time later the Princes were never seen again.

The public opinion of the time blamed king Richard III for the death of his nephews, because it was him in the end who was in charge of them. However, they were not an obstacle for him to rule because they had been already declared illegitimate by the Parliament through the document *Titulus Regius*. This burden accompanied him during his short period as a king and when the Tudors rose to power, they made everything they could to spread the news that Richard had killed his nephews, and those claims based on circumstantial evidence created the image of an evil murderer that still comes to our minds when we think about the last Plantagenet.

However, what if the biggest and cruellest crime Richard was accused of was a lie made up by his enemies?

Richard was declared by order of his deceased brother the Protector of the realm and of his children, the two heirs to the throne, but the plans for the coronation of the eldest changed when Robert Stillington<sup>9</sup> spread the news that Edward's marriage was illegitimate

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<sup>9</sup> Bishop of Bath and Wells between the years 1465 and 1491 (Camden Society, 1839: 36).

(Weir, 1995: 118), and so were their children. This change of events made the Queen, Elizabeth Woodville, extremely angry at Richard and this may have been the reason why he decided to keep custody of his nephews until the situation was properly handled.

In this stir, the Lords and Commons of the country acclaimed Richard to become king, as is proved in this extract of the *Titulus Regius* ( *Rolls of Parliament*, 1484), in which Richard and his descendants were declared heirs to the throne:

The reign of King Edward IV, late deceased, after the ungracious pretended marriage (...) (The pretended marriage was made privately and secretly, without the issuing of banns, in a private chamber, a profane place...(At) the time of contract of the same pretended marriage, and before and long time after, King Edward was and stood married and troth-pledged to one Dame Eleanor Butler, daughter of the old Earl of Shrewsbury, with whom King Edward has made a precontract of marriage, a long time before he made the pretended marriage...(It) appears and follows evidently that King Edward (and) Elizabeth lived together sinfully and damnably in adultery (and) that all the issue and children of King Edward are bastards unable to inherit or claim anything by inheritance... Moreover ... George Duke of Clarence, brother to King Edward (was) convicted and attainted of high treason, by reason whereof all (his) issue...was and is disabled and debarred of all right and claim...they might have...to the crown and royal dignity of this realm...Beyond this, we consider that you are the undoubted son and heir of Richard late Duke of York, truly inheritor to the crown and dignity royal... (*Rolls of Parliament*, 1484 <http://www.richardiii.ca/the-crimes-of-richard-iii-myth-vs-fact/> Last accessed: 06.10.2019).

As the *Titulus Regius* expresses, the Princes had already been declared illegitimate, and Richard was the rightful heir to the throne, so it would be against his interests to kill the children because this would project a very negative image of him as a king and as a person, which is actually what ended up happening. As we know, Richard had many enemies, such as the Queen whose children had just been officially declared illegitimate and the Tudor family, who wanted to usurp the throne. Would it be so hard to believe that someone else committed the crime and made Richard look guilty? Carson (2009: 177-199) suggests the following:

The prime suspect would be the person who derived most benefit from it: namely Henry Tudor, whose mother was in London at the time, diligently arranging means for her son to seize the throne (...) In Richard's case, he had been chosen as king while the boys were still alive (...) Whereas for Henry Tudor to become King, they had to be dead(...) The idea that Richard III had the princes killed in the Tower of London, with nobody noticing, is as laughable as the idea that he killed them and kept it secret (Carson, 2009:177-199).

### **3.3. Tyrion Lannister's Physical and Moral Deformity**

As explained before, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance it was a common belief that a deformed physical evidenced a wicked moral code, and such is the case of the historical treatment that the figure of the mythical king received: “By the Late Gothic, Early Renaissance art continued to mirror the cultural belief that deformity was an expression of spiritual sin” (Sullivan, 2001: 264). One only has to remember Sir Thomas More's statement in his *History of King Richard III*: *Distortum vultum sequitur distortio morum* (More & Sylvester, 1963: 7-8).

The processes turning Richard III and Tyrion Lannister into evil men were opposite ones: in the case of Tyrion, his condition as a dwarf was used to justify crimes he had not committed, whereas in Richard's, a physically deformed figure was created to account for crimes that he was accused of. The Renaissance belief previously mentioned is enough to prove someone guilty without evidence or witnesses in both cases.

Richard was accused of multiple crimes throughout the years, and in *A Game of Thrones* we see how Tyrion suffers from the same problem. Someone attempts to kill Bran, one of Ned Stark's son and Tyrion is taken into custody for it just because Littlefinger<sup>10</sup> says that the weapon was “The Imp's dagger” (Martin, 1996: 192). “Imp” is a nickname by which Tyrion is known, which obviously highlights the physical monstrosity he is associated with. Tyrion's words are not put into value as much as Littlefinger's, and he has to undergo a trial process in which not even his family defended him. During the trial, he claims to be innocent, but admits other crimes: “I am an evil little man, I confess it (...) I have wished my own lord father dead, and my sister, our gracious queen, as well (...) I have said many cruel and malicious things about the noble lords and ladies in the court” (Martin, 1996: 405).

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<sup>10</sup> Petyr Baelish was the Master of Coin during Robert Baratheon's rule. He was considered a manipulator and a very perspicuous person, always willing to betray people in favour of his best interest ([https://gameofthrones.fandom.com/wiki/Petyr\\_Baelish](https://gameofthrones.fandom.com/wiki/Petyr_Baelish) Last accessed: 06.10.2019).

Tyrion himself believes he is “evil”, without considering that he has done the same people have done to him. Even though he belongs to one of the most important noble families of Westeros, the Lannisters, no one has respect for him just because he is a dwarf, whereas his father, Tywin Lannister, and his brother, Jaime Lannister, have committed crimes such as killing the previous king, Aerys Targaryen, and his family, and they are still praised by people (“My uncle Jaime killed old Aerys” (Martin, 1996: 143), “Lord Tywin’s soldiers had torn him [one of King Aerys’ grandchildren] from his mother’s breast and dashed his head against a wall” (Martin, 1996: 107).

Tyrion knows that his sin is his physical appearance and his father makes sure he knows he is not appreciated because of it. Moreover, Tyrion has never felt love from his father not even as a child: “During all the terrible long years of his childhood, only Jaime had ever shown him the smallest measure of affection or respect, and for that Tyrion was willing to forgive him most anything” (Martin, 1996: 85).

He is aware that he is not like Jaime and Cersei in his father's eyes because of two reasons: “My mother died birthing me” (Martin, 1996: 54) and “All dwarfs are bastards in their father’s eyes” (Martin, 1996: 54). His sister Cersei, married to King Robert Baratheon, as well as his father think he is guilty of his mother’s death, and that together with the fact that he is a dwarf makes him a dishonour for the family. However, Tyrion also says that if he had been born in a peasant family “they might have left me out to die, or sold me to some slaver’s grotesquerie” (Martin, 1996: 118).

It is difficult to say if Tyrion is a “good” or “bad” character. We could say he is in the middle of the morality scale: he is not as honorable and loyal as Ned Stark, but neither he is as cruel as his father Tywin. We may conclude that he generates empathy in the readers because of the way he is treated and for this reason his bad acts are understood. Since he acts

in both ways, good and bad, he could be characterized as a "morally ambiguous character", and thanks to that ambiguity he raises suspense because of his unpredictability: "Because actions of MACs<sup>11</sup> are less predictable than those of good and bad characters, they may produce more uncertainty and suspense than characters who are consistent in their actions" (Oliver & Krakowiak, 2012: 121).

Tyrion shows his positive morality when, after Bran has almost been killed by an assassin under the orders of Tyrion's brother, Jaime (Bran was left a cripple after being pushed out of a window by Jaime himself) Tyrion tries to help Ned Stark's son by offering him the design of a horse saddle he could use and claims to have a "tender spot in my heart for cripples and bastards and broken things" (Martin, 1996: 237). He is proving himself different from his brother and the rest of his family, who think that "even if the boy does live, he will be a cripple. Worse than a cripple. A grotesque. Give me a good clean death" (Martin, 1996: 87). Tyrion is ignoring the traditional rivalry that his family and the Starks have always had and he is putting the child's life in the first place.

Tyrion evidences that not all the Lannisters are the same and that his condition as a dwarf makes him have an empathy towards Bran that others do not have.

When he is accused of trying to murder Bran, instead of trying to defend his innocence, he tries to buy the people who are holding him as a prisoner: "What do you want, Bronn? Gold? Land? Women? Keep me alive, and you'll have it" (Martin, 1996: 440). Although this is not the morally correct thing to do, readers side with Tyrion because no one would believe anything that he says, so he has to find other means to save his life. In the case of Ned Stark we will see how he firmly followed his moral code. His honorability, however, led to his death, whereas Tyrion shows how men sometimes have to yield to survive.

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<sup>11</sup> Morally Ambiguous Characters



The main thing Tyrion and the Shakespearean Richard have in common is the fact that they are both clever and witty and they know what they have to do in each situation. The main difference between them is that, whereas Richard acts out of evil in every occasion, Tyrion only acts immorally when the situation requires it.

### **3.4. Ned Stark's morality**

As well as sharing similar lives, Lord Eddard Stark and Richard III are very similar characters due to the situations in which they were involved. Both of them are enrolled in crucial circumstances situation in which the decision they make will finally decide whether they live or not.

From the very beginning, Ned is characterized by his sense of honour and his loyalty towards his ideals, reflected from the very beginning of the book: "There was no charge anyone could lay at the door of Eddard Stark" (Martin, 1996: 39). He is characterized by characters as a "proud, honorable and honest man" (Martin, 1996: 439). His acts also speak for themselves; when his good friend, the King, Robert of House Baratheon, talks about murdering Daenerys Targaryen, the last surviving descendant of King Aerys Targaryen, he claims: " 'You are talking of murdering a child (...) You will dishonor yourself forever if you do this' " (Martin, 1996: 340). Ned does not think about what is most convenient for the realm, since Daenerys, the last Targaryen alive, is the apparently legitimate heir to the Iron Throne, but about what is right. When he became Hand of the King, he made decisions in the same honorable way:

"Vengeance?" Ned Said. "I thought we were speaking of justice (...) I cannot give you back your homes or your crops, nor can I restore your dead to life. But perhaps I can give you some small measure of justice, in the name of our king, Robert" (Martin, 1996: 455-453).

This emphasis on honour is what makes the fact that Ned has a bastard son stand out, meaning that he was not loyal to his wife and that he had a child with another woman. In fact, this issue is dealt with in relationship with his honour: "Whoever Jon's mother had been, Ned

must have loved her fiercely, for nothing Catelynn said would persuade him to send the boy away” (Martin, 1996: 62); “ ‘She must have been a rare wench if she could make Lord Eddard Stark forget his honour” (...) “I dishonored myself and I dishonored Catelynn’ “ (Martin, 1996: 105).

There is no historical record to check whether Richard was as honorable as Eddard Stark, but it is known that he was fiercely loyal to his brother, King Edward IV, as has been previously mentioned in this dissertation. Many scholars such as Ashdown- Hill (2013) and Carson (“He [Richard] placed a high value on loyalty”, 2009: 22) infer from their historical reevaluation of Richard's reputation that he was an honorable man and conclude that he may not have been so evil in the end. Both Richard and Ned were Wardens of the North, helping their corresponding king take care of any problems and keeping the North loyal to the crown. Both of them are referred to as “Lord of the North”, as Kendall (1985: 156) claims about Richard. Ned is referred to as “Eddard of the House Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North” (Martin, 1996: 12). As we know, Richard married Anne Neville, the daughter of the Earl of Warwick, and therefore, he built the base of his power in the North of England, being known as 'The King of the North':

Through his wife's inheritance he was fortunate to hold estates in the north of England (...) Edward [IV] had established Richard, while in his early twenties, as the principal potentate in the unruly north, giving him powers equal to those of a viceroy (Carson, 2009: 23).

Richard and Ned have a very close relationship to their corresponding king. In the case of Richard, the king is his brother. Also, Ned and King Robert were raised together: “In his youth, Ned had fostered at the Eyrie<sup>12</sup> (...) and his fellow ward, Robert Baratheon” (Martin, 1996: 22). Robert and Ned even refer to each other as “brothers”: “Robert would never harm

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<sup>12</sup> The seat of House Arryn, one of the seven great families of Westeros. When Eddard and Robert were living there as wards, King Aerys Targaryen called for the boys to be sent to King's Landing after killing Eddard's father and brother. The Arryns refused and started a rebellion against the crown ([https://awoiaf.westeros.org/index.php/Eyrie#cite\\_note-Ragot34.7B.7B.7B3.7D.7D.7D-2](https://awoiaf.westeros.org/index.php/Eyrie#cite_note-Ragot34.7B.7B.7B3.7D.7D.7D-2)). Last accessed: 06.10.2019)

me or any of mine (...) We were closer than brothers” (Martin, 1996: 56); “Robert loves the man [Eddard] like a brother” (Martin, 1996: 78).

They are also similar in the fact that they fought side by side against the previous monarch in order to win the throne. Richard was very young when his brother took the throne from the “mad” Henry VI<sup>13</sup> for the first time in 1461, but when he did it for good in 1471 Richard was fighting with him. Ned also helped King Robert to take the throne from the so called “Mad King” Aerys Targaryen. So Robert says when he asks Ned to be his hand: ““You helped me win this damnable throne, now help me hold it’ “ (Martin, 1996: 45).

After winning the throne, in both cases there was a period of peace. However, after the kings' deaths (those of Edward IV and King Robert) came periods of political instability because both deaths were unexpected at the time. Many sources, like Charles Ross, claim that “his death [Edward IV’s] was probably more or less directly the result of continuous excess” (Ross, 1997: 415), based on the following claims about Edward IV: “In food and drinks he was most immoderate” (Ross, 1997, 415) . King Robert also loved food and drink and died unexpectedly, hit by a boar when he was hunting. In his deathbed, he claimed: “My own fault. Too much wine” (Martin, 1996: 486).

After the sudden death of the monarchs, both Richard and Ned had to face the most difficult decision of their lives after finding out that the kings' children (Edward V and Richard, Duke of York in the case of Edward IV and Joffrey and Tommen Baratheon in the case of Robert<sup>14</sup>) were illegitimate, so they did not have a claim to the throne. The situation

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<sup>13</sup> According to Wolfee (2001: 270-271), the king suffered from “psychotic illness, most likely depressive stupor, which deprived him of his wits (...) There most probably was an inherited genetic component to his illness. On his mother’s side there had been the notorious mental derangement of his Valois grandfather, Charles VI of France”.

<sup>14</sup> Robert’s children, Joffrey and Tommen Baratheon, were illegitimate because they were born out of the Queen’s incestuous relationship with her twin brother, Jaime Lannister.

was made more difficult in both cases because of the corresponding Queens' (Cersei Lannister) families, the Woodvilles and the Lannisters, two powerful families who controlled the boy king and wanted to have the power of the kingdom. The Lannisters felt threatened because Ned knew the truth about Joffrey's illegitimacy, and they did not stop until Ned ended up beheaded.

He wanted nothing so much as to seek out the godswood, to kneel before the heart tree and pray for the life of Robert Baratheon, who had been more than a brother to him. Men would whisper afterward that Eddard Stark had betrayed his king's friendship and disinherited his sons; he could only hope that the gods would know better, and that Robert would learn the truth of it in the land beyond the grave (Martin, 1996: 492).

Ned had a moral conflict but felt like "he had a duty to Robert, to the realm" (Martin, 1996: 466) so his plan was to tell the truth, but he trusted people he should not have trusted and was incarcerated and executed for treason. Richard faced a parallel situation: he probably felt the same as Ned: that he was 'disinheriting' his brother's heir by taking the crown and therefore dishonouring his beloved brother's memory.

This is the big difference between Richard and Ned. Ned was advised to take control of the throne: "The man who holds the king holds the kingdom (...) Once we have her children, Cersei will not dare oppose us" (Martin, 1996: 491). However, he was true to his moral code and answered that he was not going to dishonor his king in that way.

Even though Ned had so much less time to act and think wisely, he is characterized from the very beginning by his moral code and his loyalty, and if he had betrayed his morals he would not have been able to continue. He could have taken the throne for himself as Cersei Lannister once had advised him to do and as Richard III did, but he preferred to be true to himself and his honour led him to his death. Richard's seizing of the throne, on the other hand, seems to be justified, not only because he was the legitimate king after his brother's sons had been branded as illegitimate by the *Titulus Regius* but also because he did what he had to do to survive.

#### 4. Conclusions

It is not unusual for writers and creators to take historical facts as source of inspiration, and George R. R. Martin followed that trend. There are many echoes of the Wars of the Roses in the saga that he wrote, especially in the first book *A Game of Thrones* as he has indeed acknowledged: “I take stuff from the Wars of the Roses and other fantasy things” (Gilmore, 2014, May 8th: <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/george-r-r-martin-the-rolling-stone-interview-242487/>. Last accessed: 06.11.2019). However, he did not copy characters or situations exactly; he rather adapted characters and decided to use and highlight the features that better worked for his story.

For better or for worse, King Richard III’s reputation has risen the expectation of many novelists who have taken him as a source of inspiration for their books and many scholars, such as Carson (2009) or Ashdown-Hill (2015), who have revised the facts of every crime he is accused of in the Shakespearean play and the Tudor sources. As Langley & Jones (2013: 216) claim:

Richard III wasn’t a saint. He was a man, who played the hand he was dealt loyally and, as far as he could within the limitations of his time, humanely. Above all, whether on or off the battlefield, he never failed to display courage. In this, I am reminded of the words of Winston Churchill: ‘Courage is the first of all human qualities because it is the quality that guarantees all others’.

George R. R. Martin seems to have taken Richard’s figure and the character created by authors such as Shakespeare, and split it into two different personalities and characters: Ned Stark and Tyrion Lannister. As it has been previously mentioned, the correspondence is never one to one, but the basics and the essence of the characters is undoubtedly there. Through these characters, it could be argued that the author of the saga is revisiting the figure of the historical king in the following way: with one character, Eddard Stark, he presents his readers with what he “should have done” according to the public opinion, and with the other one,

Tyrion Lannister, what he “had” to do. However, it is important to keep in mind that both Ned and Tyrion are not exactly fictionalised versions of Richard III, but they are rather adapted in favour of the history that the saga tells.

It certainly looks like Martin made a critique of Richard III and his behaviour through the characters he created, and even taken sides. With Ned Stark, he presents how honour does not save us from death, and how sometimes it is more convenient to do what is necessary to survive, like Tyrion does, instead of being faithful to our morals.

George R. R. Martin seems to argue that, whether it was morally correct or not, Richard did what he had to do, whereas Ned did not take the advice to seize the throne for himself the way Richard did and ended up beheaded. Richard’s detractors may argue that he should have acted more “honorably”, but if he had, he would have probably died.

As a reader, my impression is that Tyrion was treated in a similar way to Richard because of the prejudices people had about him and his controversially historical figure. This constant pummeling not only from the crowd, but also from influential people, chroniclers in the case of Richard, and noblemen in the case of Tyrion, result in the total isolation of these characters and the assignment of morally questionable practices to both of them.

It is also possible to conclude that Martin may have tried to redeem Shakespearean Richard through the honorable character of Ned. Richard's honorability is present in the historical reevaluation of his reputation undertaken by authors such as Carson, which describe him as “above else, his brother’s trusted general” (Carson, 2009: 22) just like Ned was for King Robert.

However, although Richard may have been as honorable as Ned Stark was, did honorability favour Ned? As it has been previously mentioned, this seems to be the crucial point George R. R. is making with this two characters: honorability is a remarkable quality,

especially in the historical period we are dealing with, but when facing death, every man has the same fate, no matter the honorable actions they have performed throughout their lives.

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